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Careers

Careers in the Food Safety and Inspection Service



United States Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
May 1989



Food Safety and Inspection Service

Protecting America's Meat and Poultry Supply — A Job Worth Doing!

At almost 10,000 strong, the Food Safety and Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, is one of the largest public health agencies in the world. Our job is to ensure that the meat and poultry you eat are safe. This task requires an impressive array of people — veterinarians, food technologists, food inspectors, microbiologists, chemists, and a host of administrative staff.

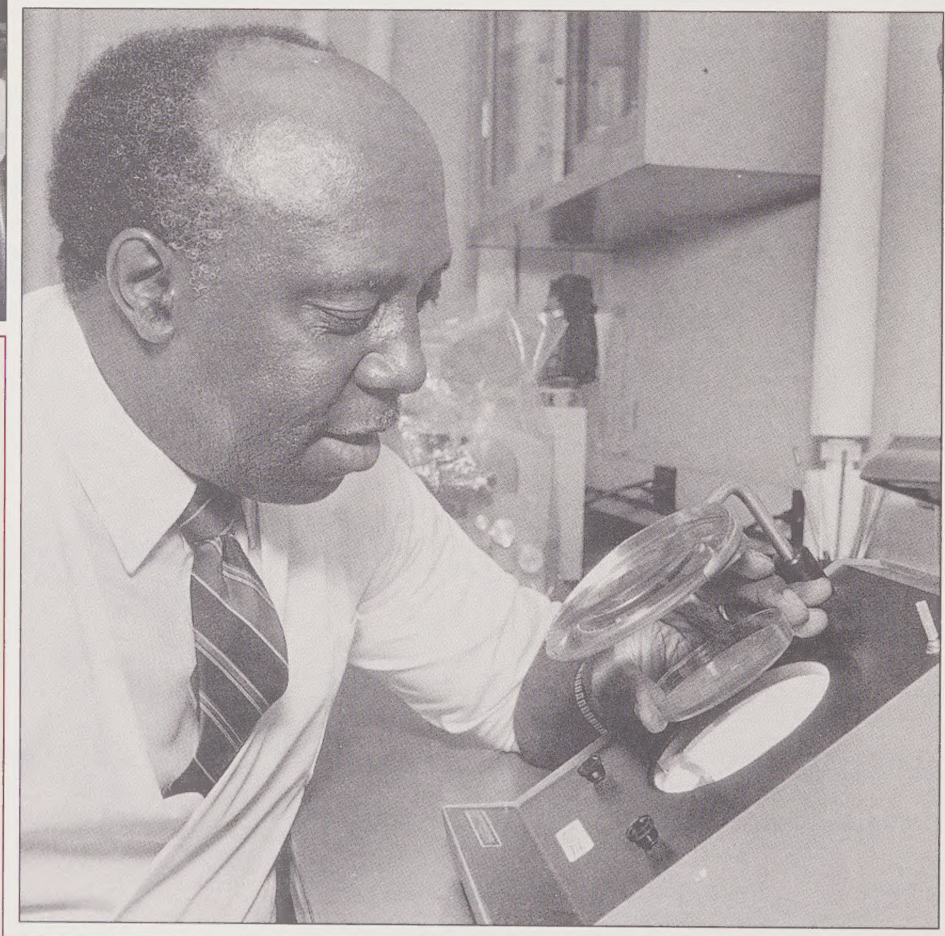
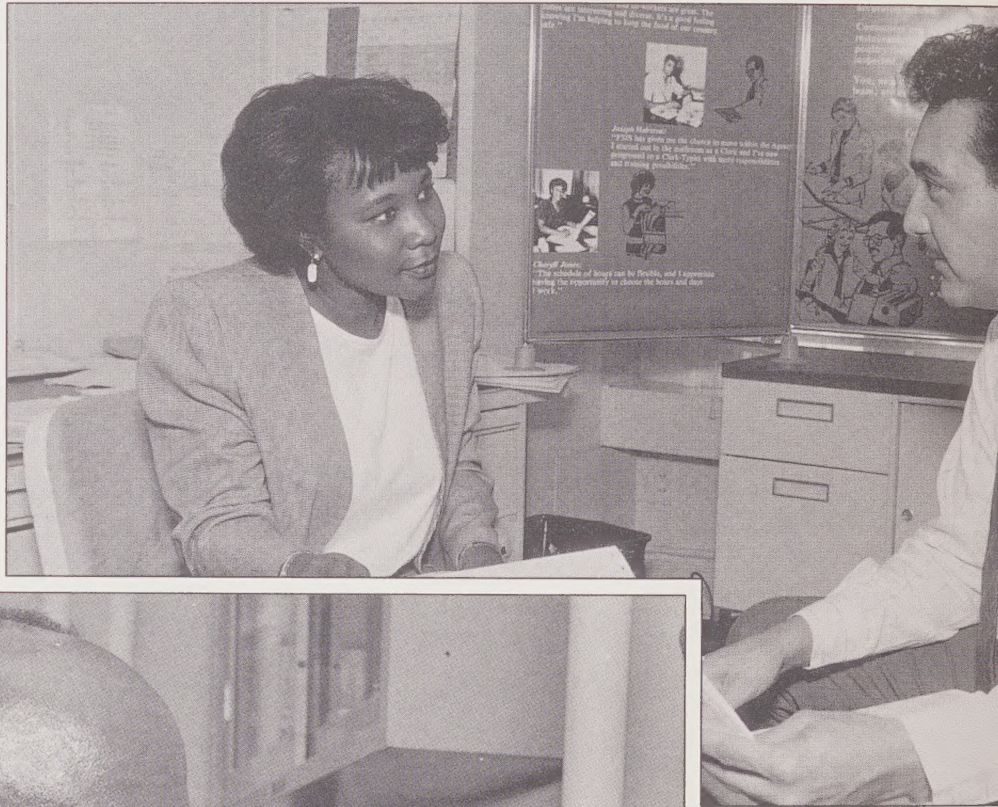
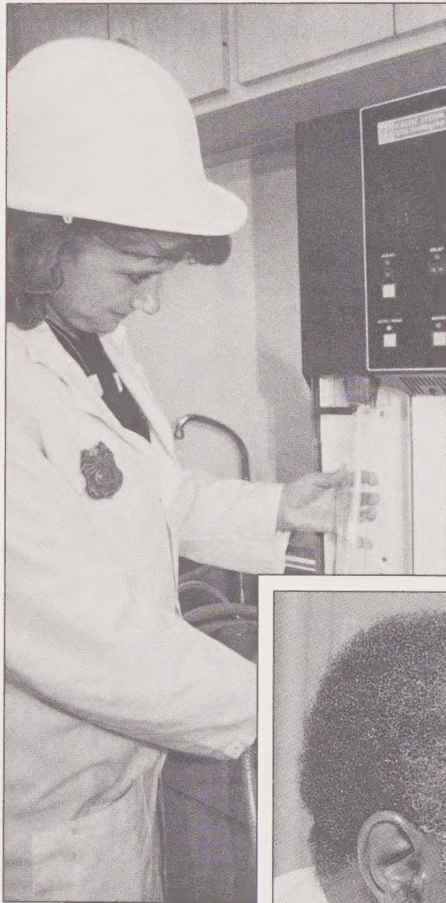
If you are looking for a job that will give you a sense of accomplishment with a forward-thinking and fast-paced employer, we may have a place for you.



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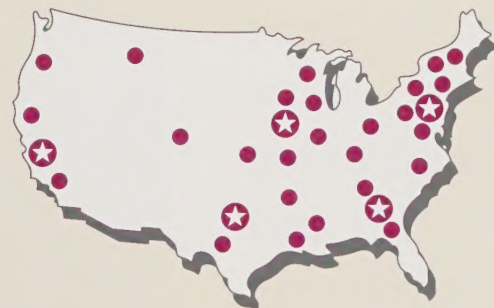
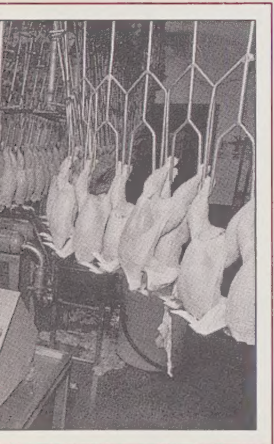
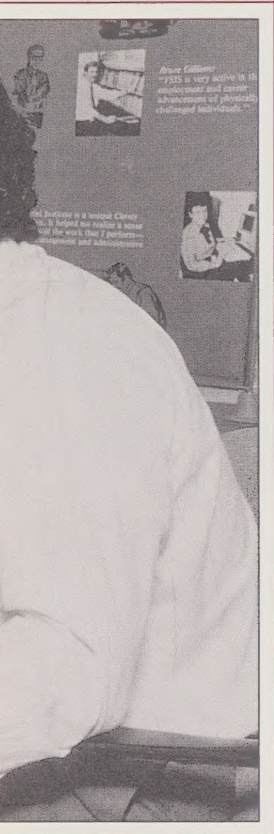
The Federal Meat and Poultry Inspection Program

Our employees do not sit behind desks and push papers — they spend their work days in the 7,000 privately owned meat and poultry plants that dot the entire United States. They are on the front line ensuring that each plant adheres to approved standards. They inspect animals before and after slaughter for signs of disease and drug and chemical residues. They also make sure that processed products — such as hot dogs and luncheon meats — are safe and truthfully labeled.

We've come a long way since 1906, when Upton Sinclair's book

The Jungle exposed filthy conditions in plants. President Theodore Roosevelt ordered an investigation, and Congress enacted much stricter controls on meat production. Since then, the inspection program has undergone extraordinary change. Inspection has become increasingly scientific, relying on the newest technology.

Sound interesting? Read on for more information about career opportunities with the Food Safety and Inspection Service.

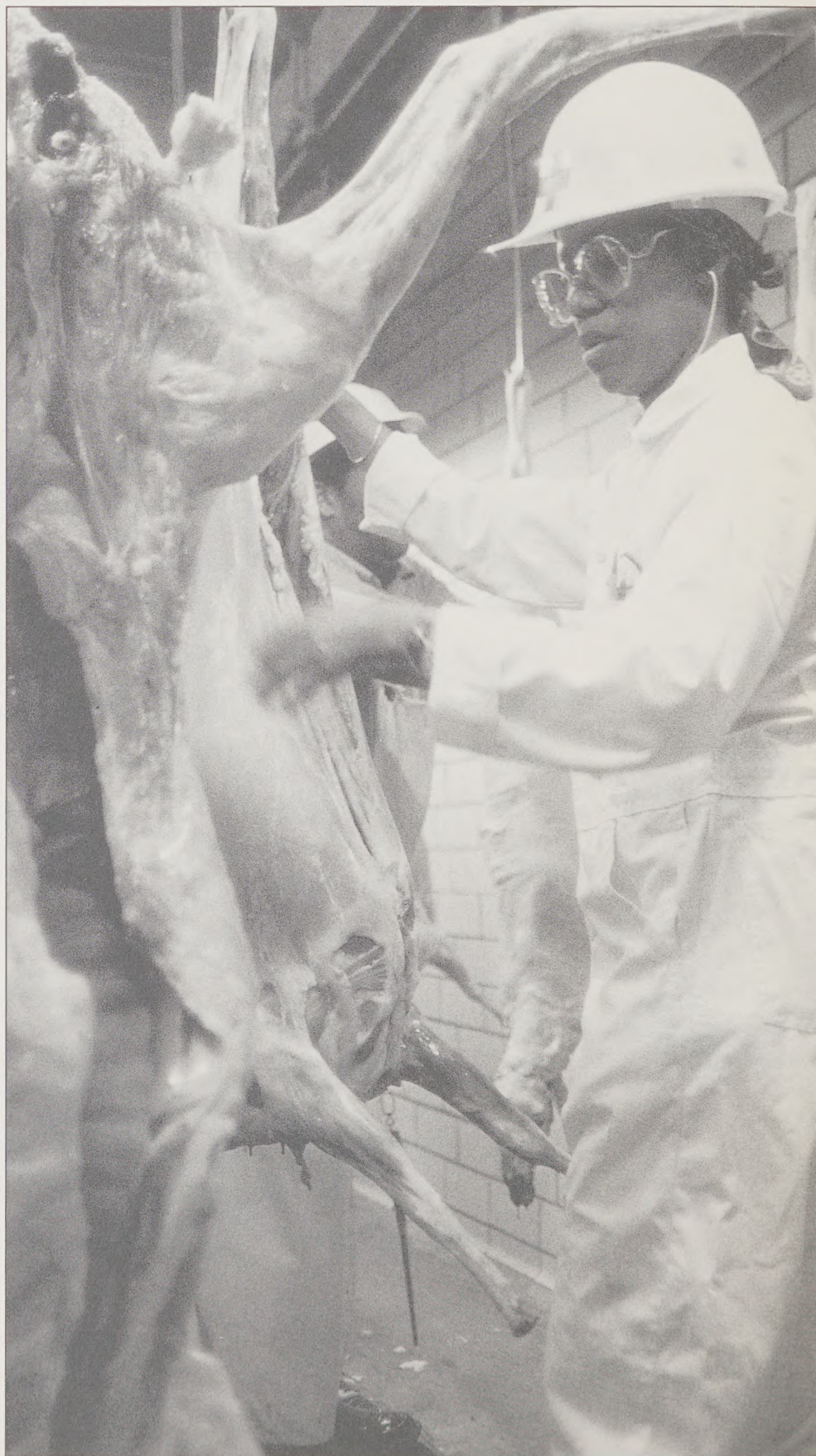


The Federal Meat and Poultry Inspection Program is administered through five regional and 26 area offices.

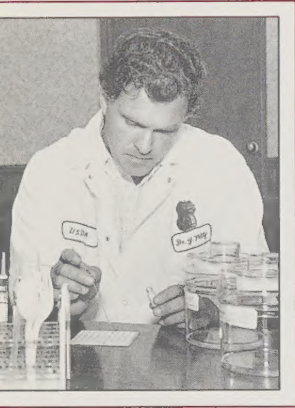
Veterinarians

More and more graduating veterinarians — and those who have been in private practice — are exploring public health as a career option.

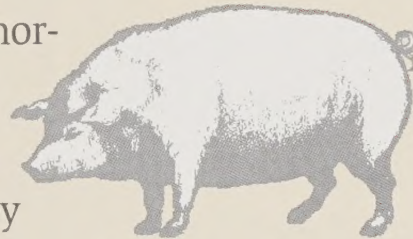
..... Many of you, though, might wonder if you have the right background to be a public health veterinarian. Don't worry . . . we have extensive orientation and training programs to help you apply your skills to the inspection environment.



What exactly do our veterinarians do?

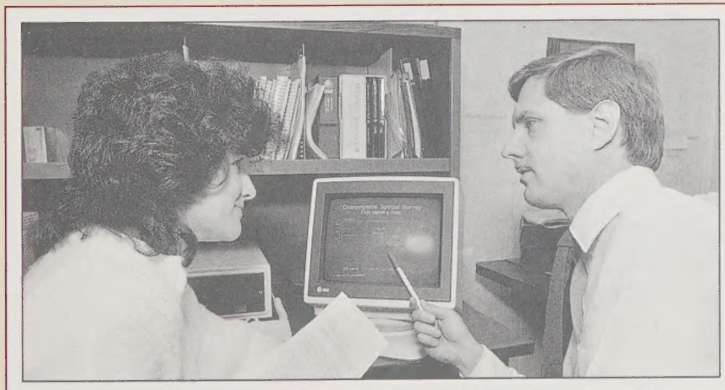


Most of our 1,300 veterinarians work in meat and poultry slaughter plants as resident experts in pathology, parasitology, and epidemiology. They supervise food inspectors, who check animals for abnormalities. Our veterinarians, however, make the final decisions on whether an animal should be condemned. They also supervise food technologists and food inspectors, who monitor the preparation, packaging, and labeling of processed products such as soups, stews, and frozen dinners.



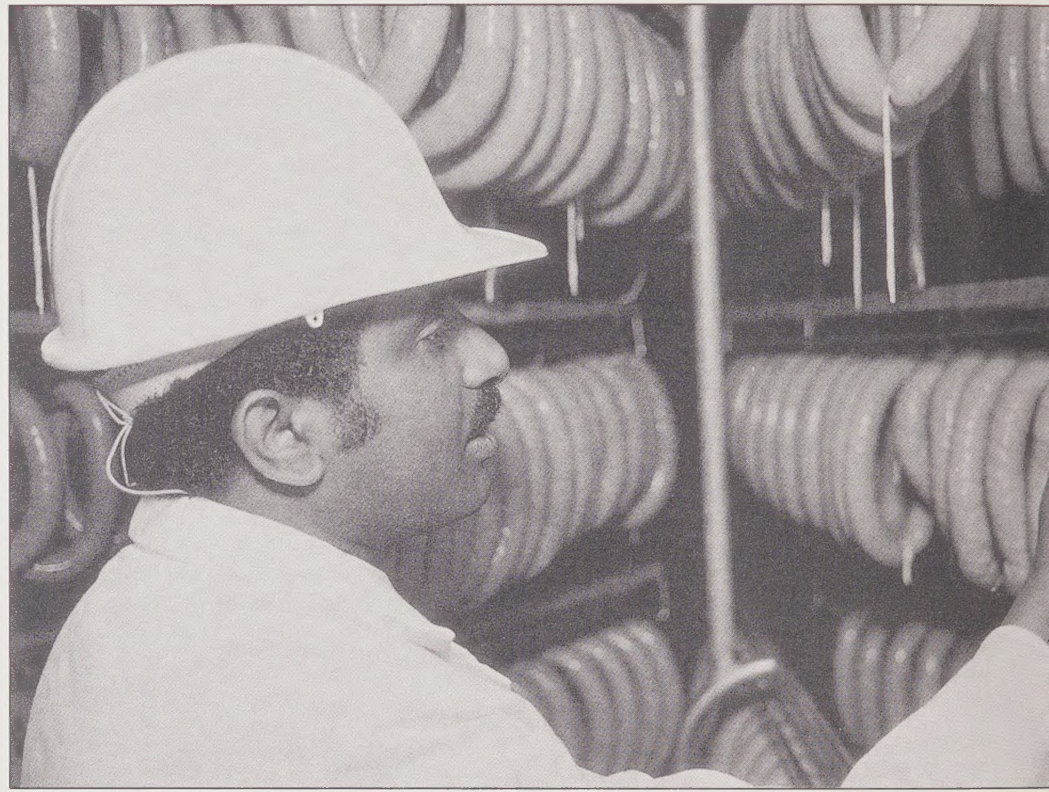
◀ “The first thing people ask me, when they hear I’m a veterinarian in the inspection program, is whether the meat they eat is safe. I can say ‘yes’ with confidence. I know I’m protecting the public health.”
— Mildred West, veterinarian

Not all of our veterinarians work in plants. Some serve as pathologists in laboratories and as managers in an office setting. A few positions are available for veterinarians interested in designing new inspection methods or instructing other professionals.



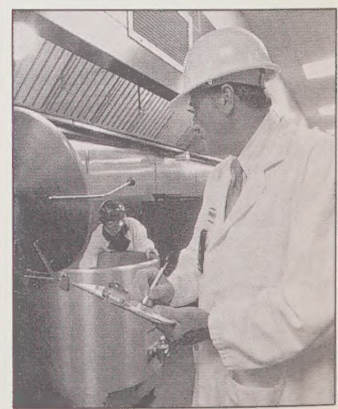
Food Technologists

Food technologists — the newest addition to our work force — are our experts in meat and poultry processing. They work in plants throughout the United States where a thorough knowledge of food science, chemistry, microbiology, quality assurance, and statistics is essential.



▲ *"I work in a complex processing plant that makes about 580 different products, so I use all of my advanced food science knowledge.*

I recently reviewed the plant's quality control plan and was able to suggest some improvements. I'm proud of that accomplishment." — Desalegn Djalleta, food technologist



What exactly do our food technologists do?



As a food technologist, you might inspect plants that can soups and stews or cure bacon or other meats, or operations where the latest packaging technology is used.

When the inspection program first began over 80 years ago, only a few processed products were manufactured. Now, hundreds of new meat and poultry products — in new packages — are seen in supermarkets.

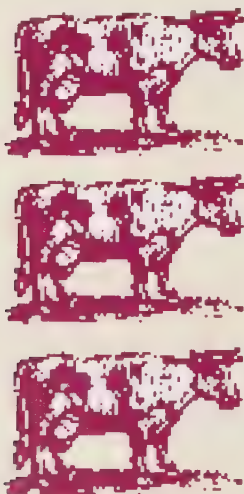
By 1997, the Food Safety and Inspection Service expects to employ 800 food technologists to inspect these complex processed products.

Supervisory and managerial positions in this field are also located throughout the country. In addition, staff positions that involve developing standards for food processing and product labeling are available in Washington, DC.




Food Inspectors

Food inspectors comprise the largest category of employees in the agency, with over 6,000 stationed across the country. They are responsible for much of the day-to-day inspection at both slaughtering and processing plants.

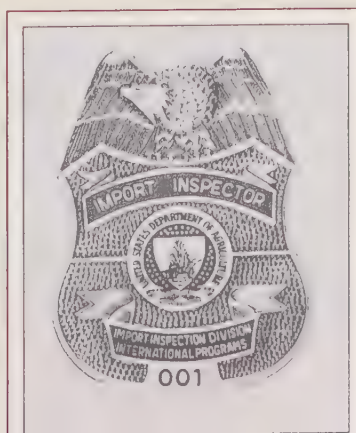
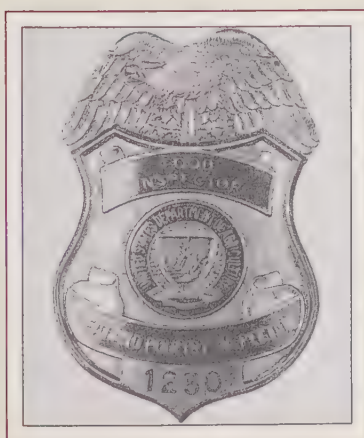


What exactly do our food inspectors do?

◀ “I’m accepted as a professional by those I work with, and that’s very important to me. I’m dedicated to my job because I feel that checking meat and poultry imports to make sure they’re safe for American consumers is very important.”
—Ronald Bruce,
import inspector

In slaughter plants, food inspectors examine each carcass and the internal organs for disease or contamination, under the supervision of a veterinarian. In processing plants, they monitor operations to make sure the plant adheres to approved procedures and labeling guidelines. 

Food inspectors are also stationed at ports and other points of entry to the United States to make sure that products imported from other countries are as safe as those produced domestically. A foreign country must demonstrate it has an inspection program comparable to ours before it can become eligible to export to the United States.



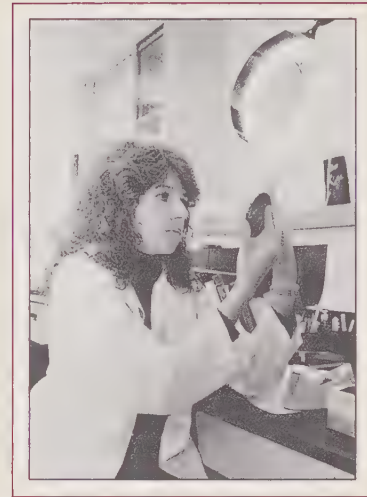
Scientific Support

Our microbiologists and chemists have the satisfaction of knowing they are protecting the public from harmful chemicals, residues, and pathogens. Over the past decade, we have increasingly relied on scientific analyses to ensure the safety of the Nation's meat and



poultry.

"Right now I'm helping to refine a DNA probe for Listeria monocytogenes and develop a test to detect Clostridium botulinum toxins A and B. It's challenging to find a test that works well, and that other people want to use." — Elisa Elliot, microbiologist ▼

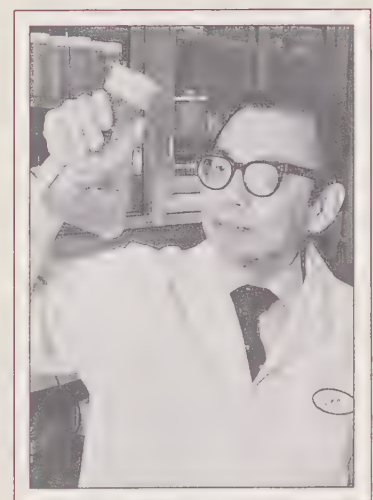


On the Forefront of New Science

Most of our positions are located at three U.S. Department of Agriculture laboratories in Alameda, CA; St. Louis, MO; and Athens, GA. Using the latest equipment and methods, scientists at these laboratories perform chemical tests to determine the composition of meat and poultry products, microbiological tests to detect contamination, and pathology examinations to diagnose disease.

The work is by no means routine, however. Emergencies such as food poisoning outbreaks and contamination incidents require quick action. Frequently, laboratory results are used as evidence when companies are prosecuted for violations of Federal regulations, such as using a prohibited ingredient.

A number of positions are also located in the greater Washington, DC, area. These involve developing new analytical methods and policies to protect the public.



Administrative Support

As in any organization, opportunities are available for administrative personnel. Most of these positions are located in Washington, DC; Minneapolis, MN; and our five regional offices in Alameda, CA; Dallas, TX; Des Moines, IA; Atlanta, GA; and Philadelphia, PA.

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"My special interest is computers; recently I have been able to help develop programs to store information for the office. I get a lot of phone calls from other offices having problems. It makes me feel good to know I can help." —
Tom Specht, clerk typist



A Vital Part of the Agency's Workforce

■ Personnel specialists assist with hiring and training employees, analyzing positions, and resolving grievances.

■ Financial managers help administer an annual budget of approximately \$400 million.

■ Equal employment specialists help managers administer the agency's equal employment opportunity program.

■ Information management and computer specialists analyze information needs and assist managers in developing automated systems.

■ Management analysts review existing programs to advise agency officials on areas for improvement. They also help develop regulations and plan for the future.

■ Purchasing and contract specialists meet the agency's needs for acquiring goods and services.

■ Communication with the media, Congress, and consumers is handled by public affairs specialists and home economists.

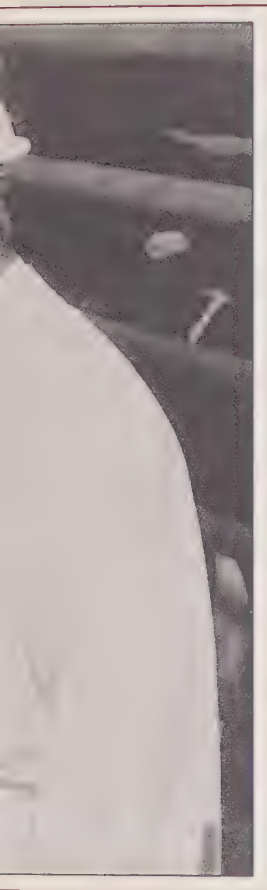


Now that
you've read
about the
various career
opportunities
available, you
may already
have ideas on
why you would
like to work for
the Food Safety
and Inspection
Service.
What about...

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Why Join Us?



Challenge

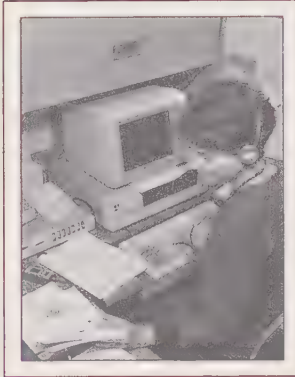
Much of the work done in our agency is at the forefront of modern science. New technology, information systems, and equipment are providing us with new insights, enabling us to constantly improve our methods of ensuring the safety of the meat and poultry you eat.

Opportunity

■ *Professional Growth.* We have a well-deserved reputation as a trendsetter when it comes to employee training and development. In the area of professional development, opportunities abound for employees who want to learn. For instance, a popular self-paced program allows you to study at home, learn new skills on the job, and take formal college training in a subject area you choose. Technical training is a high priority. Our employees learn the skills they need to do their jobs at a new facility at Texas A&M University. We also have several training programs in place for new supervisors and managers and refresher courses for the not-so-new manager.

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■ *Career Advancement.* Working in an organization this large and with so many locations throughout the United States has its advantages. Many opportunities exist to take a similar or different position in another area of the country ... and we pay your moving expenses. In fact, mobility is a key to moving up in the organization.



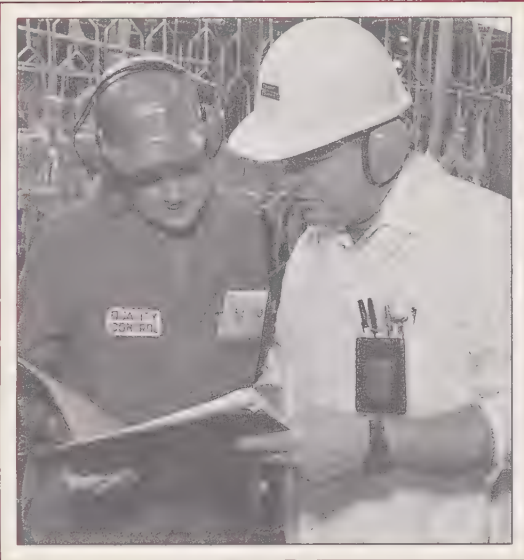
***Benefits***

Competitive pay and benefits are other good reasons for joining us. We offer an excellent retirement plan, good health benefits, and job security.

***Service***

Our employees take their jobs very seriously, because they know the public is counting on them. As an employee of one of the largest regulatory agencies in the U.S. Government, you too can have the satisfaction of protecting the consumer. You will be on the front line, ensuring that the “U.S. Inspected and Passed” mark on the package means what it says.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service invites you to consider employment with us. We have a job worth doing!





Veterinary Medical Officer

General Information

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) presently employs 1,300 veterinary medical officers (VMO's) throughout the United States. We recruit over 100 new VMO's each year, making us one of the world's largest employers of veterinarians.

As a veterinarian with FSIS, you will be the resident pathologist, parasitologist, and epidemiologist at one or several slaughter plants. You will be responsible for the antemortem and postmortem inspection of livestock and poultry and for ensuring that plants and facilities meet Federal standards of cleanliness.

Basic Qualifications

To qualify, you must have successfully completed a full course of study leading to a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree or its equivalent at an approved veterinary medical school. Graduates of foreign veterinary medical

schools must furnish proof of graduation, be able to understand and write English, and have passed the written examination in veterinary medicine as administered by either the Educational Commission on Foreign Veterinary Graduates, American Veterinary Medical Association, or the Special Advisory Committee, U.S. National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.

In addition, you must be a U.S. citizen and pass a medical examination that includes a test for color vision.

Entry Salary

If you are a recent graduate without any experience, you would start at the GS-9 level (see enclosed salary chart). You could begin at the GS-11 level if you have had one year of professional veterinary experience or a superior academic record.

Advancement

Once hired as a veterinary medical officer, you will receive on-the-job and classroom training. After successfully completing a one-year probationary period, you will progress to the next grade level. Personal initiative, job performance, and geographic mobility will determine how quickly and far you progress. Most positions are at the GS-12 level and above.

How to Apply

You need to submit:

- Standard Form 171, Application for Federal Employment;
- OPM Form 1170/CHCT 159, Supplemental Qualifications Statement for veterinary medical officers;
- SF-15, Application for 10-point Veterans' Preference, if applicable;
- Employment Availability Statement; and
- A college transcript of coursework leading to a DVM or related advanced degree.

These forms are available from Office of Personnel Management Federal Job Information Centers, located around the country, or by writing to the address below. The addresses of the Job Information Centers are listed in metropolitan area telephone directories under U.S. Government.

Send the completed forms to:

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
POB — Special Examining Unit
Butler Square West, 4th Floor
100 North Sixth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55403**

Remember, a well-prepared application saves processing time and may enhance your rating.

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Government Benefits

Annual Leave

You will earn 13 days of paid vacation per year during your first, second, and third years of employment. From your 3rd to 15th year of service, you will earn 20 days of leave each year. After the 15th year, you get 26 days of paid vacation per year.

Sick Leave

You also earn 13 days of sick leave each year, which can be carried over from year to year.

Holidays

In addition to earned annual and sick leave, you will have time off, with pay, on the 10 Federal holidays.

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Health Care

You can select from a wide range of medical insurance plans, choosing the coverage that best suits your individual needs. Plans available for coverage of both employee and family can help pay hospital bills, surgeons' fees, charges for doctors' visits, prescription medicine, and therapeutic treatments.

The Government pays part of the cost of providing medical coverage for the employee and any dependents, regardless of which plan is chosen.

Life Insurance

If you accept a position with the Federal Government, you will be given an opportunity to select low-cost life insurance coverage. This coverage will be based on annual salary and will include payments for loss of limbs and eyesight in addition to accidental death. There are also several options that can be elected to suit individual needs.

Retirement Benefits

All new hires (those who have never been employed by the Federal Government) appointed after December 31, 1983, are covered automatically by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). FERS is a three-tiered retirement plan composed of social security benefits, a basic benefits plan, and a savings plan. You pay full social security taxes and make a small contribution to the basic benefit plan, which supplements social security. You also have the option to make tax-deferred contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan, and a portion not higher than 5 percent will be matched by the Government.

Transportation and Travel Expenses

Employees newly hired for such shortage occupations as veterinary medical officer and food technologist are reimbursed for certain expenses en route to their first duty station. Included are the following:

- Reimbursement at the rate of 15 to 20 cents per mile, depending on the number of travelers, for employees and their immediate families who travel by car. If a private car is not used, employees are reimbursed for the costs of a common carrier (e.g., plane, train, or bus).

- Allowances of up to \$35 a day for lodging, and up to \$25 a day for meals and incidental expenses, if travel exceeds 10 hours. This is provided for the employee only.

- Transportation and temporary storage of household goods of up to 18,000 pounds or transportation of a mobile home that will be used as a residence.

If the Government moves you at a later date during your Federal career, additional allowances are provided for you and your immediate family.

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